FOX HILLS WEST CITIZENS ASSOCIATION

POTOMAC, MARYLAND 20854

Continuing the Fox Hills West Legacy (1968-2021)

Wonderful neighbors,

I wrote this piece hoping to capture the sense of neighborhood our original owners felt and created over the last 50 years and how. I grew up in the 70s off of Glen Rd. in Potomac in a house and neighborhood very similar to ours. It was a great place to grow up. Everybody knew everybody else and there were tons of friends my age on our block. We moved to Fox Hills West 25 year ago to give our kids the same.

I interviewed many of our remaining original owners (about 10% of our residents) to get an idea what it was like living here in the 70s. This effort is based on their memories and I tried to verify the information when I could. The rest of the time I folded as many memories as possible together to make a cohesive story. Any mistakes are unintentional but not unavoidable and interviewees names were withheld at their request.

I hope you have as much fun reading this effort as it was interacting with so many to make it. If you have any comments, corrections, questions, or suggestions, please let me know at RNelson01@aol.com.

Cheers!

Ralph Nelson

Fox Hill West Historian

December 31, 2021

Continuing the Fox Hills West Legacy **(History Stop)**

1.0 Pulte *(Association Dept)* **STOP 18**

2.0 Potomac Commons
- 2.1 Homes *(Covenants)*
  - 2.1.1 Where they hailed from
  - 2.1.2 Whatever you needed **STOP 17**
  - 2.1.3 Prices Soar **STOP 8**
  - 2.1.4 Potomac Pointe **STOP 15**
  - 2.1.5 Landscaping **STOP 3**
  - 2.1.6 Bradford Pears **STOP 4**
  - 2.1.7 Aluminum Wiring **STOP 11**
  - 2.1.8 Pin-hole leaks **STOP 11**
  - 2.1.9 Japanese Beetle **STOP 11**
- 2.2 Culture *(Social)*
  - 2.2.1 First Impression **STOP 6**
  - 2.2.2 Biggest change **STOP 7**
  - 2.2.3 Family Activity **STOP 5,10**
- 2.3 Association *(Board)* **STOP 9**
  - 2.3.1 Overview
  - 2.3.2 Social
  - 2.3.3 Covenants

3.0 Government
- 3.1 Schools *(School)*
  - 3.1.1 Cold Spring **STOP 1,2**
  - 3.1.2 Frost/Cabin John
  - 3.1.3 Wootton
- 3.2 Common Areas *(Roads & Land)*
  - 3.2.1 Parks
    - 3.2.1.1 Fox Hills West Park **STOP 13**
    - 3.2.1.2 Falls/Hadley's Park **STOP 12,16**
  - 3.2.2 Infrastructure **STOP 14**
    - 3.2.2.1 Streets
    - 3.2.2.2 Circles
    - 3.2.2.3 Sidewalks
    - 3.2.3.4 Front Entrance *(Front)*
- 3.3 Services *(Government)*
  - 3.3.1 Crime
  - 3.3.2 Snowplow

4.0 Amenities
- 4.1 Retail
  - 4.1.0 Rockshire
  - 4.1.1 Cabin John
  - 4.1.2 Montgomery
  - 4.1.3 Mini Mall
- 4.2 Family Life
  - 4.4.1 Potomac Woods
  - 4.4.2 Copenhaver-Montgomery Square
  - 4.4.3 St. Raphael's
  - 4.4.4 Bindeman Center
- 4.3 Infrastructure
  - 4.3.1 Falls Rd

1.0 Pulte: the beginning

In 1950, when he was 18 years old, Bill Pulte began building and selling houses in Dearborn, Michigan. In 1956, his company was formed in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan.

Bill Pulte started building in this area with the original Fox Hills neighborhood near Churchill H.S. In 1962, due to his Fox Hills success, he built Fox Hills West in 1968-73.

In 1972, after his success at Fox Hills West, Pulte went public. Bill Pulte had 14 children and one of his grandsons is a major leader in today's Pulte Homes.

In 1967, the **Gudelsky family** owned a 2 square mile track that used to be a tobacco farm. It had been abandoned because tobacco was known to use up the soil nutrients making the land unsuitable for farming. You can see the old farm hand's quarters at **12508 Over Ridge Rd** in the neighboring community of Copenhaver. It has been converted to a residential home.

In the late 60s, the Potomac zip code of 20854 Potomac was hot. Bill Pulte knew the Gudelsky tract was valuable. Pulte also had been looking for a good location where he wouldn't have to deal with Unions. His previous projects in Detroit and Chicago had several total shutdowns lasting many weeks because the Union members went on strike.

Before Pulte would cut the first check, he wanted to make sure the Gudelsky tract was in Potomac, not Rockville where the property was registered. After major debate at the Rockville City Council, Rockville reluctantly allowed the property to be ceded to Potomac. Then the work began.

The Gudelsky tract became the Fox Hills West and Potomac Pointe neighborhoods, and the adjacent Copenhaver Farm was bought by the Kettler Brothers. In the 60s, it became the neighborhoods of Copenhaver and Cold Spring. The original Copenhaver farmhouse was located around Over Ridge Ct but it was falling down. The Copenhaver family moved and rebuilt the house in the early 1950s at **8 Cold Spring Ct.**

The topography of the tobacco farm was not suitable for the new construction infrastructure. To properly grade the sewer line and facilitate the installation of sewer lids, Pulte leveled everything in the 2 sq mile tract. Nothing remained but bare clay. Any landscaping you see today including all trees is less than 50 years old. The first living things to come back were the bugs followed by the bug eating swallows.

Bill Pulte was very involved with what was built under his name. He visited the development often. He chose all the furniture in the model homes. He also personally inspected every spec house he built. Spec houses were fully built and connected to utilities before buyers were offered the homes. Midway through construction the county enacted a sewer and gas moratorium which would soon stop all building.

Potomac Commons Timeline

Year	Area	Event
1966	Homes: Constr	Gudelsky family owns abandoned Tobacco Farm
1967	Amenities	Cabin John Mall built
1967	Homes: Constr	FHW and Potomac Pointe land bought by Pulte
1967	Homes: Constr	Copenhaver farm bought by Kettler Brothers
1968	Amenities	Montgomery Mall built
1970	Govt: Schools	1970-2 Kids went to Wayside ES while Cold Spring was built
1970	Govt: Schools	Wootton H.S. opens
1971	Homes: Constr	September. Potomac Point houses made available. 20% less
1972	Govt: Services	Orchard Brook Dr. Not plowed because not on map
1972	Govt: Schools	September. Cold Spring opens
1972	Govt: Schools	Mrs. Hanley starts teaching Kindergarten
1971	Construction	September. Potomac Point houses made available. 20% less
1972	FHW: Social	1972-1976 Banner Glass Co. Picnics near Sugarloaf Mountain
1974	Govt: Schools	Cold Spring portable at its height due to Fallsmeade students being bussed here.
1974	Govt: Common	Fox Hills West Park open. 1969 transferred to County by Pulte.
1975	Amenities	Rockshire Mall built?
1976	Govt: Common	1976-1980 Falls Chapel Way cut through power lines
1976	Govt: Services	Random dogs problem before leash law
1976	Govt: Schools	Bussing to Wootton stopped. Kids had to walk through Horizon Hill
1976	Homes	Japanese Beetles and Milky Spore
1977	Homes	Bradford Pears civic project 5 years after moving in 1977. $15/piece.
1977	Govt: Common	1977-1981 Falls Road Park low-income housing fight
1977	Govt: Services	Kids stealing things in houses and storing them in Horizon Hill
1978	Govt: Common	1978-1982 Fight to straighten Falls Rd.
1978	Amenities	Binderman center constructed missing being a mall
1978	FHW: Social	Charlotte Fletcher was the bunny one year at Fox Hills West Park
1982	FHW Social	Fox Hills West Park has basketball and tennis courts.
1984	Govt: Services	1984-1990 When lot of teens, crime.
1987	Govt: Schools	Cold Spring went first year all-day Kindergarten.
1988	Govt: Schools	Going to close Cold Spring. Added G & T
1990	Govt: Services	Bear alert in the neighborhood
1993	Govt: Schools	Cold Spring kids went from Frost MS to Cabin John MS
1999	Govt: Common	Hadley's Park Built
2005	Govt: Common	Front entrance broken/fixed
2006	Govt: Common	Sidewalk on Falls Chapel Way
2021	History	History of Fox Hills West Written

2.0 Potomac Commons

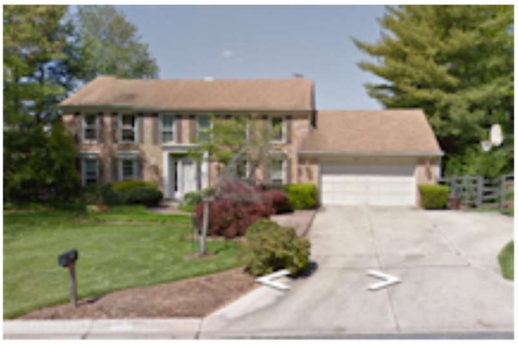
2.1 Homes

2.1.1 Where they hailed from

Our neighbors came from NW Washington, DC, Kensington, Rockville, Silver Spring, Adelphi and Bethesda where houses were not as attractively priced and had smaller lots. They could have chosen Northern Virginia except it was congested, highly transient, more expensive and not close to MD employment. Some neighbors came from much farther: Chicago, Georgia, Texas, and the New York. Most came because Potomac was the up-and-coming place. Almost all families were looking for a bigger home with a two-car garage to raise their young families and a neighborhood feel to it. One family had 5 kids living in a 3-bedroom home and needed to expand.

2.1.2 Whatever you needed

Pulte built model homes on Falls Chapel Ct - Blair, Williamsburg, Georgetown, and Hampton. The first four houses on the right of Falls Chapel Ct. were the initial model homes and the sales office was the first one on the right - 16 **Falls Chapel Ct.** The other side of the court was parking spaces. **Ian Baube** and **Chuck Hilton** were the sales managers. They were extremely competent, delightful, and pleasant. They were the person you went to for all change orders, and they kept everybody up to date on prices. The sales office moved **8904 Cold Spring Rd** when Falls Chapel Ct had been sold. Pulte construction manager **Bill Russell** was very strong and was so confident of the houses, he put his home phone on the neighborhood directory. He actually moved into a home on Wandering Trail Ct. as an original owner.



Pulte offered a basic house and everything else was extra including moving outlets. All prices were reasonable. Pulte had a $25 fee for making any change requests. With most other builders you couldn't change anything. If you didn't like it, they'd just say you can have your money back.

You were given a $100 allowance for all the lighting fixtures. You had to go to Catalanos in Falls Church to pick up the lighting. Some Pulte extras in 1972 included:

Extras	Amount	Extras	Amount
Expand the front	$2,400	Expand basement	$995
Expand the back	$2,000	All brick front	$600
Lighting allowance	$ 100	A/C, Storm windows	$990
Master bathtub	$ 60	Flooring	Extra
Extra fireplace	$1,985	Move outlet	$25

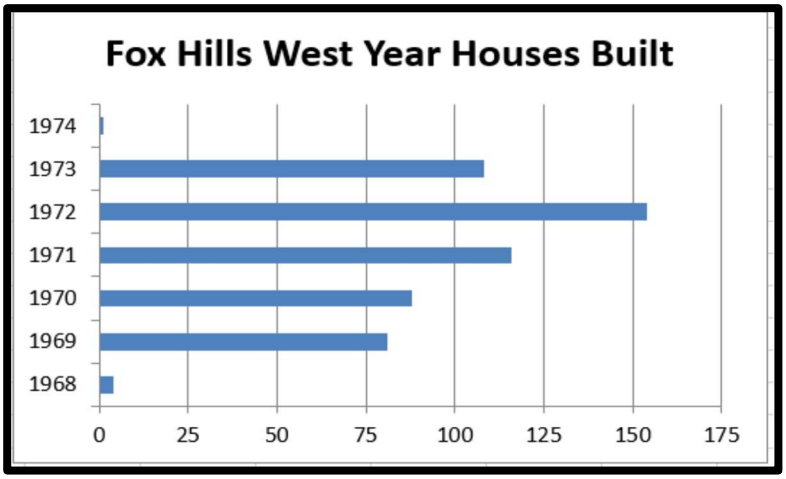
When asked why the changes were so expensive, they honestly said that somebody would have to come in later and move the other work had been done around them.

Everyone said the biggest mistake at the beginning was not asking what extras were available. Pulte salesman didn't volunteer to buyers about the options. All they had to do was let you know there was a book showing hundreds of variations.

Many didn't know there was option of expanding the house. Home sales were so hot people just said sell me the house as is. Also, doing anything after you bought it was extremely expensive. To top it off, anybody who backed up to parkland had a premium lot and paid an extra $500 - $2,000. If you bought on a cul-de-sac, it was an extra $1,200 because it was quieter and safer.

Pulte got high marks on service by most of the residents interviewed. When it was time to get final approval, you just put blue tape for all the punch list items all over the house and Pulte took care of it.

2.1.3 Prices Soar.



From 1969 to 1971, Pulte was building houses as fast as they could because there was a housing shortage in DC area, a strong economy, and Hwy 270 was cut though. The 2-car garages also made them attractive.

Demand and resulting prices were hot - sometimes $1K a month ($7.5K $2021) or prices were going up 20% a year. In early 1969 the average Fox Hills West home went for $53K ($401K $2021). To get a standard 30-year fixed loan and 20% down, you would have needed to earn $14K/year ($90K $2021). Interest rates were about 6% in the early 70s. Comparison today's $1M house you need $266K income and interest rates are about 3%. One neighbor said usually before you get a loan, the bank had a home inspector come look at the place. Fox Hills West new homes were so well built, the banks were waiving the inspection on Pulte's reputation.

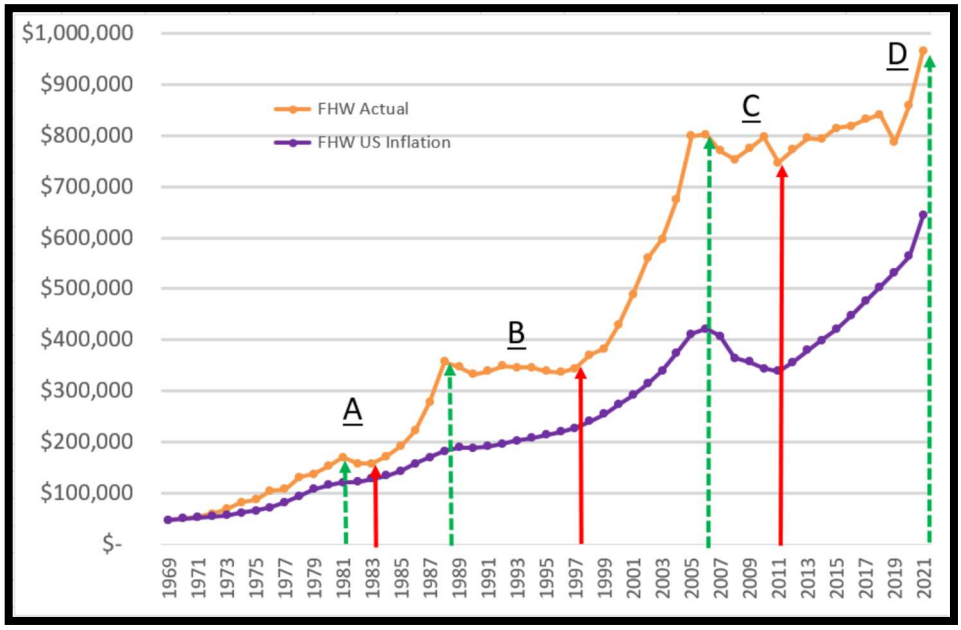
Prices changed so quickly in the 70s, Pulte stopped printing promotional material and handwrote prices. Rather than wait for the lot they wanted, one family decided to buy immediately to stay within their budget. It didn't take long to sign a contract once you decided to buy. In order to buy a home, one neighbor had to borrow from his mother-in-law. They used all their savings to put down 25% so to not have mortgage insurance. They built the largest house they could because they had 4 kids. One neighbor said his real estate agent said buy the biggest house you can because you will grow into it. Real estate agents were key, but you could also buy new construction just as easily directly through Pulte. Pulte made it very pleasant to buy directly through **Ian Baube** and **Chuck Hilton.**

2.1.4 Potomac Pointe begins

Fox Hills West success was too successful. The Fox Hills West models became too expensive. Before 1971, the original plan was to build the entire neighborhood out of the four Fox Hills West models on Falls Chapel Ct. If you couldn't afford one of those models, they made four Potomac Pointe new models

on Cold Spring Rd across from the park as an alternative. The home price point became just under $50,000.

Potomac Pointe homes were being built in late 1971. They were 10-20% smaller and 20% less expensive. In 1972, Fox Hills West homes were $50-65K and Potomac Pointe were in the high $40Ks. One family needing 4 bedrooms and a dining room had to buy a Potomac Pointe because it was all they could afford. They said after putting 20% down at closing they only had $300 left in their bank account.



Fox Hills West owners were not happy the Potomac Pointe houses went up because they would lower their values. Because Potomac Pointe owners didn't like being known as the less expensive alternative, they stopped being Potomac Pointe separate from Fox Hills West and they were combined as, "Potomac Commons."

Prices. Price have continued to soar with periodic dips over the last 53 years. The orange line is the average actual price paid and the purple line is what the price would have been if our homes had grown the rate of the average U.S. home.

Gas Moratorium.

Oil, gas, and electric were offered. If the house had a gas line, you got gas. Oil was a pain because it was smelly and delivered by tank truck. Electric was more expensive.

In January, 1972, there was a natural gas moratorium where houses were not allowed to tie into to the natural gas trunk line. If you didn't get a gas line, you got oil heat with a necessary oil tank installed. The problem then became which house you could buy. Oil made houses and financing more expensive. People debated the pros and cons and decided that it would cost more in the long term with the cost of converting the house to oil heat. Most of the houses that went for oil went back to gas heating later. At that time gas prices were high too.

Once you were allowed to be connected to gas line after the moratorium, you disconnected your oil and buried the oil tank afterward. Original heat oil tanks can be seen on Saddle Ln, Lincolnshire Dr and Wandering Trail Dr.

2.1.5 Landscaping

There was a landscaping allowance of $100. You initially were allotted 2 trees, minimal shrubbery and grass. Some trees that were offered were the White Pines. They were ok when they were small, but quickly became too big and had to be taken out 20-30 years later.

It was universally accepted that when you moved in, everything around your lot was a clay mud hole. Dirt was everywhere except at the development entrance. All the side streets were constantly building.

Lawn companies drove around looking for and got lots of business. When digging, neighbors would find "Pulte plants" in their yard - big chunks of concrete. Pulte would come by with some equipment to dig it up and simply put it in a lot at the end of the street.

Behind the intersection of Orchard Brook Dr. and Wooden Bridge Rd was the nursery for all of Pulte's landscaping they needed for the neighborhood. They kept shrubs and trees – mostly maples. Some neighbors planted the trees and plants they wanted. People sold trees off their trucks driving around the neighborhood. They were of poor quality and most had bad root balls and died. When Pulte was finished building, they bulldozed the entire nursery. Luckily, some of the neighbors pulled out the remaining unharmed trees and planted the maples around in a line on the border. That's why there are tall trees where the nursery used to be now. Neighbors wanted to put in a tennis court back there too, but they were told the old nursery was for green space by the county and had to leave it alone.

There was a generous neighbor that volunteered to help landscape homes for anyone. She was trained in landscaping. She didn't want money but wanted the community to look good.

2.1.6 Bradford Pears

Bradford Pears were introduced by the United States Department of Agriculture as ornamental landscape trees in the mid-1960s. They became popular with landscapers because they were inexpensive, transported well and grew quickly.

In 1977, the Association convinced the neighborhood to plant over 1,000 Bradford Pear Trees at $15 apiece, over cherry trees, from White's Nursery on Shady Grove Rd. Everyone bought one or two trees when the trees were young. They were beautiful in the Spring and Fall but had a funny smell. **John Thomas** was the planner. **Keith Solit**, along with **Kris Gillam**, who were on the Tree Committee, walked the community to measure & indicate where the trees would be planted. The neighborhood came together for it – except for Streamwood that decided to plant their 7 homes with Japanese Cherry Blossoms.

Bradford Pears were grafted and weak and the structure of the tree made it prone to damage. When they became older and the branches got heaver, it put more strain on the junction. It became clear it was a poor decision by the Association. Certain areas were more prone to collapse than others. During thunderstorms and snowstorms, the trees would self-prune. After one hurricane, over 100 of them fell down. It got so bad that Maryland banned planting them.

The association had a tree-a-thon in 2003 where they helped neighbors plant hundreds of the safer pear tree called the Aristocrat Pear. It is a much sturdier pear tree but not as attractive.

2.1.7 Aluminum Wiring

Many houses built in Fox Hills West between 1968 and 1972 were wired with aluminum instead of copper because aluminum wiring was a cheaper alternative. The wiring was specific with the outside of the house being copper, downstairs was copper, and upstairs was aluminum.

They said there was a shortage of copper, but it wasn't true. The wiring itself isn't a problem, aluminum conducts electricity safely. The trouble is at the connections. Aluminum is a softer metal than copper, and besides being prone to damage during installation, it also expands more when heated. The expansion and contraction of the wire can lead to wire creeping out from its place under the screw holding it in place, causing loose wires and overheating. Another difference between aluminum and copper is

oxidation. The layer that forms on copper conducts electricity easily, but aluminum oxide is a bad conductor of electricity, which can lead to overheating.

The U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reports that homes with aluminum wiring are 55 times more likely to have "fire hazard conditions" than homes wired with copper. Wall plates would get warm, and the aluminum wire would glow red. It would start electrical fires by slowly damaging its insulation and heating things around it.

The retrofit all of the wiring to fix the problem was also expensive. Qualified electricians had to be hired to come in and repair all the dangerous connector problems.

2.1.8 Pin-hole leaks

Many residents have had pinhole leaks in their copper pipes since the late 1990s. The cause is not exactly known, but in 1994, trying to improve the treatment process to meet Safe Drinking Water Act requirements –by removing more natural organic material thought to be a carcinogen–the WSSC could have removed part of what protects the pipe from corroding eventually causing pitting problems or changing the water's corrosivity in ways that we don't understand. Complaints about pinhole leaks in copper pipes started pouring in to the WSSC in the late 1990s. Copper can be counted on for only 25 years to 50 years but if you have three leaks within six or eight months, they suggest you replace all of your pipes." The cost of replumbing typically runs from $3,000 to $6,000.

Pitting, which leads to pinhole leaks, is generally not the result of corrosive water, but of dissimilar metals interacting and "starting a battery of reactions that just consumes the pipe. If the water were corrosive, we'd have a general dissolving of the copper.

Tell-tale signs" of potential pinhole problems include:

- Rattling of the pipes when a faucet or tap is closed.
- Green stains on porcelain fixtures.
- Sediment buildup in toilet tanks.
- A persistent strong, noticeable smell of chlorine in the water.

In 2003, the WSSC began adding orthophosphate to its water, the same strategy that the City of Folsom, CA implemented. Used as a corrosion inhibitor, it is often added to reduce lead leaching from plumbing fixtures. The addition of orthophosphate forms a protective layer on the interior of the copper pipe. This has shown to inhibit pit initiation and can help slow or even mitigate pit propagation.

2.1.9 Japanese Beetles

In the early 70s, Pulte cleared everything to grade the neighborhood. Nothing remained – including the topsoil). When it came to landscape the yards, they brought in topsoil (that had good sized rocks) and hydroseeded everything. Then around 1973 to 1975, large brown patches started showing up in the lawns and rose buds were destroyed. Soon people saw beetles, Japanese Beetles. Their grubs were multiplying under the grass and eating the roots. It was speculated they came with the topsoil brought to landscape or they were burrowed deeper than the bulldozers.

Initially, everybody went to the hardware stores to get traps – bird seed stands with yellow lures above jars. They would catch the beetles by the thousands, but that wasn't enough and didn't dent the population. Then came milky spore. The lawn services started to apply it. It became a community project because it affected everyone. Even the county started spraying Milky Spore everywhere. Slowly it worked and around 1980, they disappeared.

2.2 Culture

2.2.1 First Impression

The first impression of the neighborhood for most was Fox Hills West was it was in the country – with no sidewalks and traffic lights. It was also rustic. One neighbor came out to look at houses in 1968 looking at models on Falls Chapel Ct. and got stuck in the mud. Everything past Churchill H.S. on Tuckerman La. was woods. There was no Wootton Parkway or Montrose Rd past Seven Locks Rd.

From D.C. to get here, you went down River Road to Falls Rd, turned right. and drove up past the horse farms. One neighbor said although it was out-of-the-way, she immediately knew it was where she could raise her family. Another said the houses were nice and whole neighborhood was a standout to newcomers. People kept their houses nice. One memory was of people horseback riding up and down Wooden Bridge Road and the kids loved seeing the horses.

One big reason to move in is the bus line on Falls Rd and there was a Marc Train that stopped in Rockville from Martinsville, WVA to Union Station. It was comfortable and reasonable with good parking. You saw the same people every day. The Marc train stopped at the old train station behind St. Mary's Church at 307 South Stonestreet Avenue.

When it came to welcoming a new neighbor, they used a tried-and-true strategy to jump start the relationship. The key was to take pies in containers that needed to be returned so you got a second visit.

2.2.2 Biggest change

Consensus on the biggest change in the neighborhood in the last 50 years is:

- Fox Hills West is international – an amazing diversification of cultures.
- Stay at home parents went from a majority to the minority.
- Several noted the increasing number of children of owners moving in.
- The sidewalk along Falls Chapel Way for children to walk to Cold Spring.
- All the landscaping. It's a beautiful neighborhood after being all clay.
- Falls Rd Park and Hadley's Park
- Some of the homes where not well kept up. A lot of deferred maintenance.
- What has not changed is the willingness of owners to follow covenants and it is a great place for all ages to meet and have fun.

2.2.3 Family Activities

Kids

Most of the families who moved in originally had young children within 6 or 7 years of each other or would have them soon. Kids always had friends to play with and many are still friends today. The constant: kids playing in groups outside in the streets, in the parks, or in the creek catching tadpoles - all

the time. Bikes were everywhere. They enjoyed running free through back yards playing capture the flag, red rover, soccer, basketball and roller skating.

One house was known as the popular "sugar house" where you went for an afternoon snack of sugary cereal and whole milk. Others just had Toll House cookies.

There were no cell phones. Kids **knew when it was time to come home or if** they simply got too cold (or hot). They all came home for dinner (or stayed at their friend's house) at the same time hearing parents blow horns, ring bells, or flash porch lights. They wouldn't wait for the last bite of dinner to go back outside so they could play flashlight tag.

Of course, there were the ever-popular sleepovers. You knew everybody's parents, so it was ok. Kids would watch TV and played games before dinner and always go to bed late.

MSI Soccer started in the mid-70s. Neighbor Tony Castro organized and started the first soccer team and parents took turns being his assistant coaches.

In the Winter, neighbors even roped off streets to go sledding. Sometimes. There was sledding on the Cold Spring Elem. hill above the soccer fields and parents would drive kids over to the Frost Middle School hill.

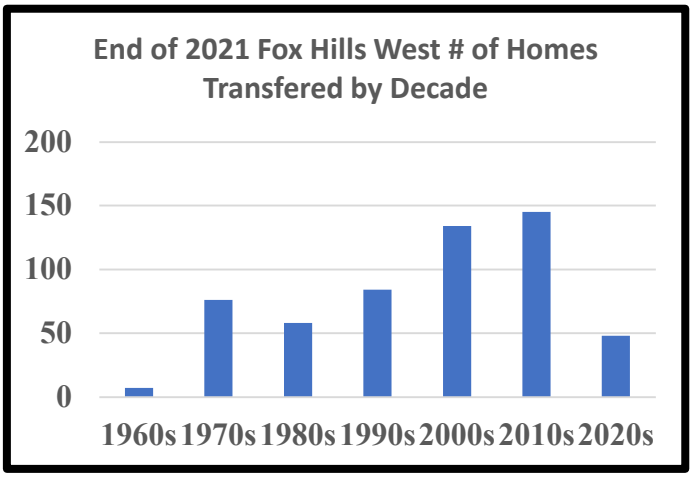
Neighbors were generous to let teens and tweens on their streets to shovel their driveway the 70s.

The popular structured activity was scouting. Girls would start out as Brownies and move to Girl Scouts There were a lot of Girl Scout Cookies sold in the neighborhood. Boys started out in Y-Indian Guides (program for son and father, with activities they could do together - trips & parties at houses), moved to Cub Scouts, and finished as Boy Scouts with their pinewood derbies.

Family

The common theme for family social life in the early 70s was the block party on weekends with some meeting for cocktails. People were looking for some sort of attachment. Everybody was new and wanted to be friendly. You felt safe. People would get permission to block off roads, pull out grills to the front yards, put on music, cook, and set up Pot-luck tables while their kids ran around and played baseball using the houses as 1st and 2nd base.

The favorite foods: hot dogs, hamburgers, baked beans, potato salad, and chips and dip. They'd have big parties on the last day of school, 4th July, Labor Day, and Memorial Day. Then there was the ever-popular Ice Cream Socials.



The second favorite family activity was picnics with other family friendly places like Sugar Loaf Mountain.

Parents also worked together to form babysitting clubs. One parent would be the designated babysitter, while the rest would drop off their kids to run and do errands.

Adults

Then there were the adults forming together to take care of their mutual nesting challenges. Neighbors worked together on a Garden Club that was a real co-op. One house was the hub, and everybody ordered in bulk to save money. The order was delivered to the house and everybody came to pick up their order. True neighborhood cooperation.

There was a lot of entertaining – having people over. And food was always a constant and still is. A weekend adult activity was the gourmet club – at one home or progressive. They picked a theme, and all would prepare a dish. Also, families routinely shared dinners by making twice as much as they needed and took it over to their neighbor who reciprocated. Slowly going to restaurants took over.

2.3 Association

2.3.1 Overview

In October 1972, the neighborhood took over management by Pulte and formed the Fox Hills West Citizens Association and meetings were held in people's homes. **Ralph Alterowitz** was the first president.

2.3.2 Social

While the neighborhood was being built, there were the Pulte social gatherings (cocktail parties) in one of the model homes. The house was packed, inside and out and many new friendships were made.

The Association's big initial event was the 1972-1976 Banner Glass Co Picnic near the base of Sugar Loaf Mountain that lasted all afternoon. It was a blow-out with hundreds of people attending. Banner Glass had a picnic area with lots of family activities: badminton, basketball, horseshoes, volleyball etc. Then everyone paid for the meal of hot dogs, hamburgers, baked beans, chips, etc. and went potluck for the rest that was put on long tables the Association brought. Everyone brought they own chairs and sat around chatting. All ages enjoyed the event. Everybody had a good time, and it was extremely cohesive.

Since its beginning, annual events have been developed including the Easter (now Spring) Party, Garage Sale, Summer Picnic, Halloween Party, and Santa's Fire Engine.

2.3.3 Covenants

Everyone followed the covenants with few exceptions. Original owners said covenants have been consistent and requests were answered in a timely fashion. **It was agreed that the Covenants served the community well.**

3.0 Government

3.1 Schools

3.1.1 Cold Spring Elementary

Cold Spring Elementary opened its doors in September 1972 with **Ruth Spearman** as principal. Principals were normally rotated, but Ruth was allowed to stay at Cold Spring a long time around till 1985 when she was sent to an integrated K-2 school because they thought she could make it work.

Cold Spring enrolled about 360 students. Everybody walked to school. It was a suburban dream. It was the beginning of our most famous Kindergarten teacher, **Ms. Joan Hanley**, who never married but taught multiple generations of many families. Also **Mrs. Hobie Seitz,** school secretary, who lived her husband John on Falls Chapel Way. She was the "nanny" of the school. She kept them safe and if your kid was sick, she kept them next to her in the office till you could come get them. **Mrs. Ann Gedosh** was a tough 5th grade teacher who lived on Saddle La. **Mrs. Goldenson, Mrs. Tougidus** and **Bob Sindall** were also favorite teachers.

Before Cold Spring was finished, our students were bused to Wayside Elementary. From the first day in September 1972, Cold Spring was oversubscribed considering that all three new neighborhoods feeding it kids (Cold Spring, Copenhaver, Fox Hills West) were full of young families. That was made worse when kids from Falls Meade were bussed in till their school could be completed. The trailer classrooms followed and remained there until **Fallsmead** had their own school and left in 1974. During this time, the county overbuilt their school system. The excess school planned Lake Normandy School became the Potomac Community Center**.**

Cold Spring had the progressive and popular "open classrooms" design of the 1970s. It was thought to be a good learning opportunity – but end up being changed. Many believed that America's formal, teacher-led classrooms were crushing students' creativity. No whole-class lessons, no standardized tests, and no detailed curriculum. The best of the open classrooms had planned settings where children came in contact with things, books, and one another at 'interest centers' and learned at their own pace with the help of the teacher. It was noted Cold Spring did well on the state tests with or without the open space after being number one in the entire state for so many years, teachers joked open space must not have been all that bad! Some bright kids would listen to other classes during their class. But the modern layout didn't survive. It was a distraction to many kids. Expect two adjacent classes to ignore each other while listening to hour long lectures? Great teaching can only do so much for all students. When visitors come into the classroom spaces today, you can tell where each classroom was designed to go because each one had its own sink. Externally, Cold Spring won an external architecture award for their building fitting into the neighborhood.

But 14 years after it opened in 1986, things changed. The local neighborhoods were not turning over enough students to produce the 60 new kindergarteners needed to keep the school open. In response to this threat, they went to all-day Kindergarten in 1987 and brought in the county's Gifted and Talented program to ensure four classes of 4th and 5th grade in 1988.

3.1.2 Frost/Cabin John Junior High

The big issue has always bussing. Cold Spring isn't really in the Wootton District. It's a small dangling enclave of 360 kids that can go anywhere easily.

In 1976, the county discontinued bussing to Wootton from the neighborhood. They increased the distance needed to justify getting a bus. It was a straight-line method through neighborhood and parks. People complained but calmer heads succeeded noting if they gave us bussing, they didn't have to send us to Wootton OR Churchill. They could bus us anywhere like Richard Montgomery or Rockville High School.

In order to get to Frost/Wootton, kids had to walk through an open field by the stadium and Front hill. This was a place where kids who did, smoked because it wasn't close to home and far enough from school.

Our middle school from 1970 until 1992 was Robert Frost. It had 1,150 students. Then in 1993, our 60 non-GT 5th graders went to Cabin John with 1,045 students.

Nobody had any Middle School stories. It's possible nobody remembers their kid's tween years.

3.1.3 Wootton High School

In 1970, Thomas Wootton High School opened with **Principal Dr. Coles.** He was very popular to kids and parents alike. Again, there wasn't much said. Student body was academically competitive. Kids were well prepared for college.

In the mid-70s there was re-districting proposed bringing more Gaithersburg students to Wootton. Meetings at Richie Park.

3.2 Common Area

3.2.1 Parks

3.2.1.1 Fox Hills West Park

Fox Hills West Park on 12710 North Commons Way was opened in 1974. It currently has a tennis court, basketball court, playground, and gazebo. It has been the location of the annual Easter (now Spring) Party and Summer Picnic. The original plan for it to be a little park to play pickup football. Neighbors asked them to put up a volleyball net, but they didn't.

Pulte used it as a dump for construction scrap by digging a big hole. In the early 80s, when they wanted to build the tennis courts, the county had to come and remove the scrap. The county also put in pine trees to block the view.

Fox Hills West Park is really known for the tennis court. It was very busy early on. You had to sign up for an hour. You have to give up the court whether or finished or not. Certain people didn't. You had a 10-minute grace period to be late or you gave up your spot.

3.2.1.2 Falls Rd/Hadley's Park

Stage 1: Junior High School site (1969 – 1977)

Around 1974, the Montgomery County Master Plan designed the 19.8 acres between Falls Rd and Fox Hills West for a junior high school. It was going to have an Olympic sized swimming pool. The county did not end up needing the land and it became surplus. The School Board decreased its school site inventory because the need for new classroom construction was declining.

Stage 2: Low Income Housing (1977 – 1981)

In 1977, when the park was surplused, some options included: school bus lot, an office building, or regular housing. But it was the Housing Opportunities Commission (HOC) who wanted to make the site subsidized housing.

Gail Ewing led the effort to avoid subsidized housing because a friend, who was member of the board, asked her to help. Gail studied on Tuesdays at the Rockville Library for a degree in government and wanted to go into foreign service. The County Council hearing for the park was across the street and she could see what was happening with the park without much effort. When she found out the park would be up for grabs, representing the neighborhood fell to her.

The neighbors were not excited. One of the big arguments was there wasn't any public transportation. There was only one bus in the morning. People would not be able to get anywhere. Subsidized housing would need busing the county couldn't provide.

When **Joyce Segal** from the HOC had a community meeting about subsidized housing at Richie Park Elem. Over 300 people attended. One man stood up and stated if they did make it subsidize housing, "he'd shoot all the owners." The situation was becoming unbelievable.

Fox Hills West association members and Gail met with County Council members to make it a planned park with playing fields and trees. Gail realized the council members were indifferent. **Councilman Esther Gelman** told her where to go to have their voices heard. She said go to the planning and school boards and meet with everybody and be sure to cover all her bases. After the meetings, she and the Fox Hills West Board thought everything was lost. There was no support from anybody.

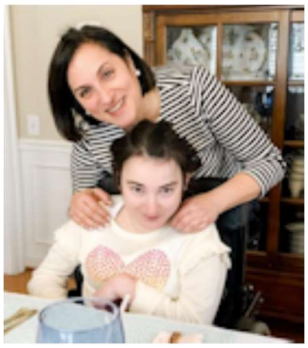
Gail decided to ask the community through the Huntsman for every household to write letters to be picked up by the board. Gail started a huge movement including Horizon Hill's association, Copenhaver association, MSI, Mont. Civic Assoc. and the Potomac Almanac. Homeowners wrote 1200 letters and 2000 people signed petitions from the surrounding neighborhood and presented it to the next County Council meeting. 800 people showed up at the next County Council public hearing where they had to put overflow people in the cafeteria and piped in the meeting on monitors.

In the end, the neighborhood won surplused Junior High land as a park to be enjoyed by all. The land was not subsidized housing.

Stage 3: Parkland (1982 – 1998)

The Montgomery County Council designated the land the Falls Rd. local park with soccer fields in 1981. The site was leased to the Park and Planning Commission for $1 per year and opened it in 1982.

Stage 4: Hadley's Park (1999 – present)



Hadley Kramm was developmentally challenged in a wheelchair and lived on the corner of Huntsman and Paddock. Her parents wanted to design, build and pay for a playground where kids of all abilities could play. Her mother worked to raise money for it including corporate money from McDonalds, selling bricks, and t-shirts. Shelly petitioned for this first handicap all-inclusive park in the county. Even Mark Shriver from the Kennedy clan as a delegate at the Maryland House of Delegates weighed in. In 1999, it would become a poster park, and everybody wanted to copy it. As an aside, Hadley's Dad was a pharmacist/chemist that invented flavors to mask bad medicine taste so Hadley would be able to take the many drugs she needed.

Kids Enjoy Exercise Now (KEEN) organization had annual picnics at Hadley's. All of KEEN's programs are based on a single principle: pair a trained volunteer with a young person with disabilities and let them discover together what they can accomplish together.

3.2.2 Infrastructure

When under construction, there was no traffic control in the neighborhood. Slowly they were added when we started to work with someone in the county council.

3.2.2.1 Streets (Falls Chapel Way)

- **Falls Rd. Light**. Used to be a 4-way stop. The Fall Chapel and Falls Rd intersection stop light was installed because it was too dangerous getting out.
- **Cold Spring intersection stop.** People on Cold Spring had to stop, and Falls Chapel went straight through and didn't have to stop. In the late 70s they had enough accidents to make it a 4 way stop.
- **Wooden Bridge intersection stop**. A stop sign at Wooden Bridge and Falls Chapel Way was added but people initially didn't heed it.
- **Cold Spring Elem**. Speeding has always been a problem near the Cold Spring and speed bumps have been discussed. Now the road is narrowed, and flashing lights are installed.
- **Tuckerman cut through**. Around 1976-80, the last street completed was Falls Chapel Way when it was cut through to Tuckerman La. under the power lines. Until then, the road had blockades at Falls Chapel way and Cold Spring Dr. At first, people didn't want it through but realized it was a good idea after.

3.2.2.2 Circles

Circles are supposed to be maintained by the residents on them. Nobody had opinions on this.

Red and White Azaleas planted by the ladies in one circle in the 70s and they are still there. Another neighbor bought a tree for the middle on S. Stable House Ct

3.2.2.3 Sidewalks

When everybody bought houses in the 70s, Fox Hills West was supposed to be an open area with no sidewalks. The Association's official policy was that it didn't take a position on the sidewalks and only provided the citizen's individual positions. There are sidewalk templates at the top of every driveway skirt in Fox Hills West – within the county rights-of-way which is 40' either side of the street centerline. Because there were no sidewalks, most of the socialization was a result of relationships from Cold Spring Elementary.

Around 2003, The Cho's on Lincolnshire asked if they could have a sidewalk to Cold Spring to walk their kids to school along Falls Chapel Way. Mrs. Cho was legally blind.

In 2006, there was furious debate under President **Lynn Jordan**.

FOR: It was a safety thing. The main argument for a sidewalk was children would get their feet wet going to school. Also, kids would be safer being off the main way to get to the elementary school because it's a walking school. They said there were no other walking schools without a sidewalk in the county.

AGAINST: The con said it wasn't fair to the other neighbors because there should be sidewalks everywhere then. How would kids not get feet wet from their houses getting to Fall Chapel Way. Most of the people who were against the sidewalk didn't have children or had grown children. They also said the sidewalk would devalue their homes. Finally, they said they had to shovel the snow but when it was finally done, the Association agreed to reimburse neighbors $75 a year for shoveling costs.

NEITHER: Some didn't care because it didn't affect them and wasn't an issue.

The pros won and one day construction equipment came out and installed the sidewalk in hours. On a positive note, they didn't take out any exiting trees by having a winding path along Falls Chapel Way.

3.2.3.4 Front Entrance

When the development was completed, there was no front entrance constructed. None of the neighbors knew when the front brickwork was installed. It was up by 1974.

We know in 1996 a hose bib was put in to help water the bushes and flowers.

In 2005 a car took the turn into the neighborhood too fast and took out the right side of the brick wall right after all the bushes and plants had been replaced. That's when our great volunteers took over. First, they had to raise the money to replace the wall. After a Huntsman Drive, 11 donations came in bringing in a couple thousand dollars. Then insurance added enough to replace it. Next, they had to design and build it. A neighborhood designer volunteered to design it. Then another neighbor owned a construction company and did the construction work at a very reasonable price and quickly. In a week, the foundation and frame were built and all that remained was finishing the plaque. In another week, it was done.

3.3 Government Services

3.3.1 Crime

Crime has been low in Potomac Commons. Minor stuff was reported like mailbox theft, mailbox smashing with baseball bats or iron pipes, unlocked cars and garages entered into or stuff stolen from those houses that were unlocked.

In 1977, a group of kids were stealing things in houses going through laundry room windows. They were storing them in a Horizon Hill abandoned farmhouse. Eventually they were caught.

Neighborhood Watch. In the 80s, from 1984 – 1990, there were a lot of teens in the neighborhood resulting in an uptick in disturbances. The association had the police come out and talk to small groups about keeping their shrubbery below the windows and locking their doors. If you make it difficult, they will go elsewhere they said. Crime at the time was usually done by teenagers. We were told to watch out for our neighbors and call the police if we saw something unusual.

3.3.2 Snowplow

From 1972 to 1975 Orchard Brook Dr. and Wooden Bridge, plows did not go down the hill. They realized talking to the snowplow drivers because it was such a new neighborhood, it was simply not on the map. Streamwood was always plowed last.

4.0 Amenities

4.1 Retail

4.1.0 Rockshire Mall

Giant owned the entire shopping center. Rockshire was built in the early 1970s across from Wootton H.S. Most remember going grocery shopping at the Giant because it was never busy. Others remembered an ice cream store, Asian carryout, Greek restaurant, and a hairdresser. In 2010, it went out of business and is slated for townhouses.

4.1.1 Cabin John Mall

Opened in 1967, this continues to be a favorite place to go like the Giant. Remembered was the twin movie theatre that was where the Grilled Oyster is now.

4.1.2 Montgomery Mall

Opened in 1968, many remembered the Woodies, Garfinkle's, and Hecht's as the staple stores like Macy's and Nordstrom's are today. Concept of an enclosed mall was a big deal in the day.

4.1.3 Mini Mall

Built in the 70s, you could find a 7-11; Gifford's ice cream; Cache Pot - was a gift shop that had a large inventory of plexiglass items which were very popular in the 70's -; Plants etc. (moved near Tally Ho Potomac); purse store, children's shop; and Hardware Store. Special note was the Shoe Train that is now moved inside Cabin John Mall. Mr. Ed sold shoes at Shoe Train. He was the kindest guy. Seven Locks Barber which may be the only remaining original establishment. Bill the owner is a great person with an interesting history.

4.2 Family Life

4.4.1 Potomac Woods Pool

Potomac Woods Pool was available. They had family days. The problem was belonging to the pool where your friends were.

4.4.2 Copenhaver-Montgomery Square Pool

Originally, you had to live in Copenhaver to belong to this pool according to their covenants. You didn't have to belong, but membership came with the house. Like all the rest of neighborhood age dependent facilities, they too had to open up their membership to sustain themselves. In order to belong, you needed to pay a bond and yearly dues. In the mid 90's gold medal Olympian breast stroker **Mike Barrowman** swam there

4.4.3 St. Raphael's Catholic Church

Opened in 1968, St. Raphael's Catholic Church was a big draw. Many set their social life to it. Mentioned was a strong women's group and their pre-school that's now an award-winning 8th grade. Helped Catholics with their blessed sacraments through CCD. Finally, it had a teenage club.

4.4.4 Bindeman Center

In the mid-1970s, there was a major effort by the County to build a shopping center with a grocery store with a gas station where the Bindeman Center is now. It was ended over community opposition.

Constructed in 1978 as part of the Washington Hebrew Congregation for early childhood and temple religious center, it has a gym, pool, and theatre and a pre-school.

4.3 Infrastructure

4.3.1 Falls Rd

Falls Road is more interesting. Started as a 2-lane road in horse country. Over the years, it stayed 2 lanes. When original owners moved in it was a narrow winding road with what was thought of an excessive speed limit especially at night. It wasn't hard getting on to because it was slower paced and quieter than it is now.

Around 1978 to1984, there was a big issue around straightening and widening Falls RD into 4 lanes. All communities affected complained of rush hour traffic and tractor trailers going through supplying Potomac Village from 270. The county compromised and put in turn lanes at the intersections. You can see where the four lanes would have widened the road by the swaths of green space on either side.

Original Owner Fox Hills West Questionnaire

1.0 Pulte *(Association Department)*
How was the neighborhood established?

2.0 Potomac Commons
2.1 Homes *(Covenants)*
2.1.1 Where they hailed from
Where did you come from and why did you come here?
2.1.2 Whatever you needed
What did extras cost and did you get any?
2.1.3 Prices Soar
How hard was it to buy and finance your home?
2.1.4 Potomac Pointe begins
Did you know the neighborhood has two sub-neighborhoods?
2.1.5 Landscaping
2.1.6 Bradford Pears
What can you share about the Bradford Pears?
2.1.7 Aluminum Wiring
2.1.8 Pin-hole leaks

2.2 Culture *(Social)*
2.21 First Impression
What was you first impression?
2.22 Best change
What's the biggest change you've seen?
2.23 Family Activities
What did kids, adults and families do socialize in the 70s? Scouts? Food?
2.3 Association *(Board)*
2.3.1 Overview
What have you done with the Association? Was it positive?
2.3.2 Social
What's your favorite social events over time?
2.3.3 Covenants
Have you had to use the covenants and how was it?

3.0 Government
3.1 Schools *(School)*
3.1.1 Cold Spring
How did Cold Spring start and run in the 70s.
3.1.2 Frost/Cabin John
Any memories about your child's middle school?
3.1.3 Wootton
What memories do you have of your child at Wootton?
3.2 Common Areas *(Roads & Land)*
3.2.1 Parks
3.2.1.1 Fox Hills West Park

How did FHW Park start and how it's been used?

3.2.1.2 Falls/Hadley's Park

What do you know about the struggle for its use?

3.2.2 Infrastructure

3.2.2.1 Streets

How have our streets developed – stop lights, signs, and Tuckerman?

3.2.2.2 Circles

Have you ever heard about maintaining our circles?

3.2.2.3 Sidewalks

What do you know of the history of our sidewalk(s)?

3.2.3 Front Entrance *(Front)*

Do you know when the front entrance was built and maintained?

3.3 Services *(Government)*

3.3.1 Crime

What kind of crime has been in the neighborhood?

3.3.2 Snowplow

What has our government responses to weather been?

4.0 Amenities

4.1 Retail

4.1.0 Rockshire Mall

When did they build it, what were your favorite stores, and when closed?

4.1.1 Cabin John Mall

Your favorite stores and stories. It's evolution?

4.1.2 Montgomery Mall

What was it like in the 70s? Favorite stores? It's evolution?

4.1.3 Mini Mall

When built? Favorite stores. It's evolution?

4.2 Family Life

4.4.1 Potomac Woods

Did you use it? Stories?

4.4.2 Copenhaver-Montgomery Square

Did you use it? Stories?

4.4.3 St. Raphael's

Did you use it? Stories?

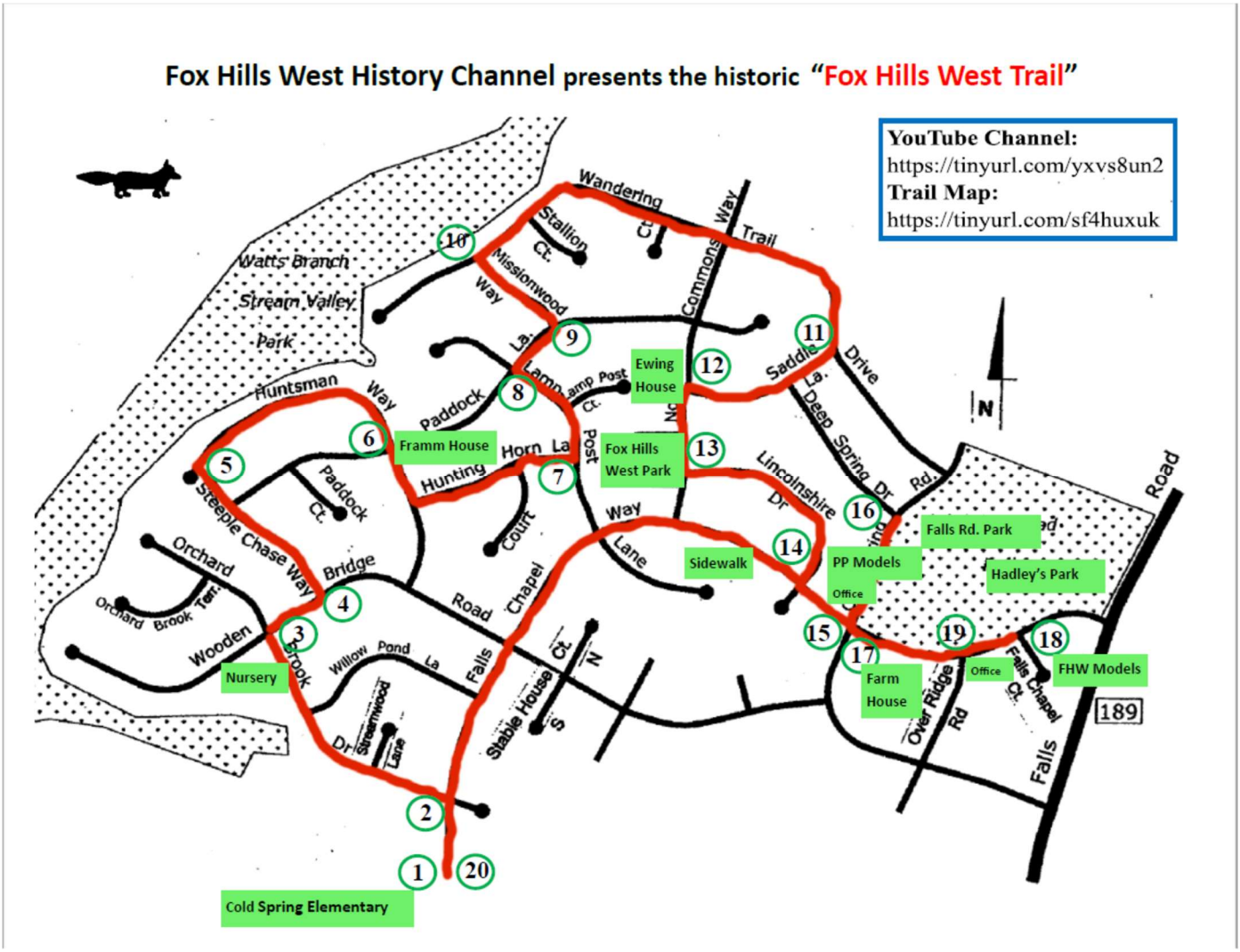
4.4.4 Bindeman Center

Did you use it? Stories?

4.3 Infrastructure

4.3.1 Falls Rd

How was it when you arrived and how has it changed?


Fox Hills West History Channel presents the historic "Fox Hills West Trail"
YouTube Channel:
https://tinyurl.com/yxvs8un2
Trail Map:
https://tinyurl.com/sf4huxuk
Watts Branch Stream Valley Park
Wandering Trail
Stallion Ct.
Missionwood Way
Commons
Saddle La.
Deep Spring Dr.
Rd.
Road
Ewing House
Lamp Post Ct.
Framm House
Horn La
Hunting
Post
Fox Hills West Park
Huntsman Way
Paddock
Paddock Ct.
Steeple Chase Way
Orchard
Orchard Brook Terr.
Wooden
Nursery
Bridge
Road
Chapel
Court
Way
Lane
Sidewalk
Lincolnshire Dr
Falls Rd. Park
Hadley's Park
PP Models
Office
Farm House
Office
FHW Models
Falls Chapel Ct.
Over Ridge Rd
Falls
189
Brook
Willow Pond La
Falls
Stable House Ct.
Streamwood Lane
Cold Spring Elementary
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